

In the Eyes of the Ancestors

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178 coming from the smaller towns to buy. The Indians still bring pottery to
 442 sell retail in towns that they visit during a fiesta. One of these is the barrio
 443 of Lok'ibal in the municipio of Villa Carranza, where people go on the
 third Friday of Lent to get holy water from the spring.

The Indians have not taken advantage of the truck to buy pottery wholesale and market it directly in the smaller towns, selling from the truck in the plaza as some of the wholesale fruit truckers do. Another operation which they have failed to profit from is buying the wheat harvest and selling to government warehouses, as some of the Ladino truckers do.

44 Lack of capital is the major reason for failure to exploit these opportuni-
 471 ties. In marketing the contraband liquor, which is the most flourishing of
 273 the new enterprises, the Indians have not yet entered into the external
 443 markets except in the case of one young unmarried mother. Wholesale
 434 purchases are made by Ladinos, primarily women, from other towns who
 resell the liquor in Comitán and on the coast. There is however, a well-de-
 675 veloped home market since all contracts are sealed with the offering of li-
 681 quor, the "gift of the gods," all court fines are paid in liquor, and the main
 583 gift in betrothal is liquor. The cantinas with phonograph players opened
 275 by the cooperatives operate very successfully on Saturday night and during
 216 fiestas. The internal market for liquor is controlled by a syndicate of the
 548 forty-two independent liquor distillers. The price is set at 4 pesos per liter
 435 for all buyers, with the buyer providing the bottle.

241 Agricultural production is not geared to a market, and Indians do not
 442 take advantage of fluctuations in price. Wheat yields a lower return per
 443 unit of land than corn, but it is grown for two reasons: the Indians believe
 that crop rotation of corn and wheat prevents depletion of the soil, and
 wheat requires less work since no cultivation is needed. Wheat is a cash
 crop and none of it is milled or consumed directly in town. Poor families
 sell their wheat "standing" to Teopisca truckers. The price given the
 435 grower is usually about 90 pesos per hundred kilograms, and it is resold at
 110 or 120 pesos in Tuxtla or to the government storehouses. Wheat is
 sometimes brought directly to San Cristóbal millers who give 120 per hun-
 dred kilograms. Corn is primarily a subsistence crop when grown in the
 center. Corn grown in hot country ejido land is now sold in Teopisca and
 489 San Cristóbal. The local truck cooperative has a special permit which gives

New Economic Activities

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members entry to the ejido colony, an area where traffic was formerly excluded because of the monopoly by the large trucking companies. Both the fruit and root of chayote are sold in August by some families who have a supply over consumption needs. It is brought along with pottery to the market of San Cristóbal where it is sold to *regatones*, retail sellers who have stalls.

Decisions as to what crops to plant are not responsive to market fluctuation. With the major emphasis on subsistence crops, the farmers have little margin of land on which to experiment with profitable but risky ventures. They have little knowledge or experience. There are no full-time specialists in market operations, although the truck drivers may gradually assume a greater role in this respect.

Very few Indians of the region, and none of those in Tzo'ontahal sell corn to the National Warehouses (*Almacenes Nacionales de Deposito*), although the warehouses offer prices higher than the going market price for corn. (940 pesos per ton in comparison to 500 to 600 pesos at harvest or 800 pesos offered a few months later by wholesalers who come to town). The reason for their failure to take advantage of the higher market price is that they do not have sufficiently large crops to pay the transportation costs of 28.75 pesos or the "tip" to ensure that their crops will not be declared substandard because of impurities, rotten kernels, insects, or excessive water content. In addition to that, they must spend time at the warehouses and in traveling. The alternative to the sale of crops to national warehouses is sale to wholesalers.

Dealing with external agencies. Entering into competitive areas where they were formerly excluded, the Indians are encountering opposition from competitors and are the prey of departmental and state government agents. The reduplication of bureaucracies at the state and departmental level means that they will be subject to the double "bite" or *mordida* if they pursue their enterprises. Operating on minimal capital, they are not able to fulfill all the requirements, or buy all the necessary permits and licenses. Because of monopolization of certain traffic by the larger syndicates of truck owners, they proceed without permits and are often caught.

The Competition for Power

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port. At his death, he had no successor, and "the town remained in peace."

In this first political contest, the conflict was interpreted as opposition between the dual divisions. Factional disputes and the sense of political responsibility and control were contained within these parameters, and any conflict was conceived of as a threat to territorial balancing mechanisms.

The new factions that have developed since 1963 are tied to economic rather than territorial competition. In 1960 the first truck-owning cooperative was organized under the leadership of the former Ladino secretary. The twenty shareholders of the town had only a small amount of capital in the truck, and the controlling interest was in the hands of the secretary's wife. The cooperative was merely a device to gain business in carrying pottery and wheat from the town to the market centers. In 1963 a new truck-owning cooperative was organized by local Indians. The two brothers, Santiago and José, secured capital to buy the truck from thirty residents of the town without any assistance from outside. The shareholders of the new cooperative came from both sides of the dual division, and from the outlying barrios.

When the leaders of the new cooperative tried to get permits and certificates to license the car and the operator, they were refused by the town president who was a shareholder of the first cooperative. The Indians then hired a Ladino truck driver from the neighboring town, and the son of one of the shareholders served as assistant. They realized that it was necessary to get control of the local political positions in order to extend their operations. With the help of the schoolteacher, they got eighty-one signatures on the petition for the PRI candidacy of one of the brothers, José, in the presidential nomination of 1964. He was opposed by a ladinoized Indian living in one of the barrios who was backed by the Ladino secretary who was leader of the competing trucking cooperative. The opponent did not have a chance of winning, as the leaders of the new cooperative pointed out, because of two strikes against him: he was not a resident of the center and he had only PAN backing. The Indians are aware that nothing can be gained politically by a PAN-backed president since PRI is now the party in control of regional and national offices.

After José's election, the Indian truck driver was able to get a driving license. With the help of the schoolmaster, the cooperative was able to get

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